

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Hydra-Walk, Inc.

Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence

Hydra-Walk - Preparing To Run

Client Profile:

Hydra-Walk, located in Lindsay, Oklahoma, manufactures a working steel table that automates the process of loading and unloading pipe to and from derricks. The table eliminates a lot of the manual handling of pipe. The company, founded two years ago, employs approximately 10 people.

Situation:

Hydra-Walk was founded when Kent Tolman and his partner, Ron Jones, began thinking about improving the system of loading and unloading drill pipe. Experimenting with material from the junk pile, the partners soon developed a machine that could perform the motions they had in mind. Unfortunately, several design shortcomings and engineering bugs plagued the equipment and prevented the start of full production. The Lindsay Chamber of Commerce referred an agent from The Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence (The Alliance), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to the fledgling company, knowing The Alliance could help define and solve these problems.

Solution:

The Alliance talked to Tolman and Jones and discovered that they weren't sure about specific engineering aspects of their project. The Alliance looked at the basic design and made several adjustments—like the length of the lift arm (a major element of the machine) and modifications to the lift arm rollers. The Alliance worked with the Lindsay Industrial Development Authority to obtain financing for a new manufacturing facility, and helped the partners wade through the paperwork necessary to secure manufacturing and invention tax incentives. Finally, the Alliance registered the machine as a new product with the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology. As the new company, now called Hydra-Walk, launched into production, The Alliance helped find critical equipment, and partnered the company with Chickasha Manufacturing Company, which now machines the steel lift arm and other smaller components of Hydra-Walk's table. By combining capabilities, Hydra-Walk is using a much stronger and better part and saving a lot of production time. This arrangement allows Hydra-Walk to concentrate on manufacturing and leasing. Since its inception, the company has created eight new jobs to meet product demand and anticipates doubling in size to keep pace with customer orders in the coming year.

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Results:

Produced a machine that is revolutionizing workload and safety at oil rig sites.

Applied for and received numerous tax breaks and incentives.

Created 8 new jobs

Moved into a new production facility

Applied for and received several patents on its invention.

Expecting sales to double in the coming year.

Testimonial:

"The changes suggested by The Oklahoma Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence made our machine stronger and more efficient. They were important changes we could not have made on our own."

Kent Tolman, President